

THE ORDER OF READERS VESPERS

For Holy Friday

Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Amen.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *Thrice.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot out our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. *Thrice.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Amen.

Lord have mercy. *Twelve Times.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and Ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

O come, let us worship God our King.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God.

PSALM 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as if it were a curtain; who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels

spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire, Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back forever and ever. The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand. At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid. The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them. Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth. He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the waters run. They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field: the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst. Beside them will the birds of heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice. He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for cattle, and green herb for the service of men, To bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man. To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted. There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them. The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares. He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad. Young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together, and they lay them down in their dens. But man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, therein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this dragon, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled. Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return. Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works, Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being. May my words be sweet unto Him, and I will rejoice in the Lord. O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that have iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The Sun knoweth his going down, Thou appointedst the darkness and there was the night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and Ever, and unto ages of ages,
Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. *Thrice.*

Lord, have Mercy. *Forty Times.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and Ever, and unto ages of ages,
Amen.

LORD I HAVE CRIED SEQUENCE

People: *Tone One*

Lord I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me.

Hearken unto me, O Lord!

Lord I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me;

Attend to the voice of my supplication

When I cry unto Thee. //

Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Let my prayer be set forth

As incense before Thee,

The lifting up of my hands

As an evening sacrifice. //

Hearken unto me, O Lord!

Reader:

Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door of enclosure round about my lips.

Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins.

With men that work iniquity; and I will not join with their chosen.

The righteous man will chasten me with mercy and reprove me; as for the oil of the sinner,
let it not anoint my head.

For yet more is my prayer in the presence of their pleasures; swallowed up near by the rock have their judges been.

They shall hear my words, for they be sweetened; as a clod of earth is broken upon the earth, so have their bones been scattered nigh unto hades.

For unto Thee, O Lord, O Lord, are mine eyes, in Thee have I hoped; take not my soul away.

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity.

The sinners shall fall into their own net, I am alone until I pass by.

With my voice unto the Lord have I cried, with my voice unto the Lord have I made supplication.

I will pour out before Him my supplication, mine affliction before Him will I declare.

When my spirit was fainting within me, then Thou knewest my paths.

In this way wherein I have walked they hid for me a snare.

I looked upon my right hand, and beheld, and there was none that did know me.

Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul.

I have cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my hope, my portion art Thou in the land of the living.

Attend unto my supplication, for I am brought very low.

Deliver me from them that persecute me, for they are stronger than I.

Bring my soul out of prison: that I may confess Thy name.

The righteous shall wait patiently for me until Thou shalt reward me.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord, O Lord, hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Tone One

All creation was changed by fear
when it saw Thee hanging upon the Cross, O Christ.

The sun was darkened,
and the foundations of the earth were shaken.

All things suffered with the Creator of all.//

O Lord, Who willingly didst endure this for us, glory to Thee!

For Thy name's sake have I waited for Thee, O Lord, my soul has waited for Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.

(Repeat: "All creation was changed by fear... ")

From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord!

Tone 2

An impious and transgressing people –

why do they imagine vain things?

Why do they condemn to death the Life of all?

Oh, great wonder!

The Creator of the world is betrayed into the hands of lawless men.

He Who loves mankind is lifted up upon the Wood,

that He might free those bound in Hell, who cry://

“O long-suffering Lord, glory to Thee!”

For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

Today the blameless Virgin

saw Thee suspended upon the Cross, O Word.

She mourned within herself and was sorely pierced in her heart.

She groaned in agony from the depth of her soul.

Exhausted from tearing her hair and cheeks and beating her breast,

She cried out, lamenting:

“Woe is me, O my divine Child!

Woe is me, O Light of the world!

Why hast Thou departed from mine eyes, O Lamb of God?”

Then the bodiless hosts were seized with trembling and cried:

“O incomprehensible Lord, glory to Thee!”

Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!

When she who bore Thee without seed
saw Thee suspended upon the Tree,
O Christ, the Creator and God of all,
she cried bitterly: “Where is the beauty of Thy form, O my Son?
I cannot bear to see Thee unjustly crucified!
Hasten and arise,//
that I too may see Thy Resurrection from the dead on the third day!”

For His mercy is abundant towards us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

Tone 6

Today the Master of creation stands before Pilate.
Today the Creator of all is condemned to die on the Cross.
Of His own will, He is led as a Lamb to the slaughter.
He Who fed His people with manna in the desert is transfixed with nails.
His side is pierced, and a sponge of vinegar touches His lips.
The Redeemer of the world is slapped on the face.
The Maker of all is mocked by His own servants.
How great is the Master’s love for mankind!
For those who crucified Him, He prayed to His Father, saying://
“Forgive them this sin, for they know not what they do!”

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Tone 6

See how the lawless assembly condemns the King of creation to death!
They are not ashamed, even when He reminds them of His mighty works:
“My people, what have I done to you?
Have I not filled Judea with miracles?
Have I not raised the dead by My Word alone?
Have I not healed every sickness and disease?
How have ye repaid Me?
Why have ye abandoned Me?
In return for healing, ye give Me blows;
In return for life, ye put Me to death.
Ye hang your Benefactor on the Cross as an evildoer;
your Lawgiver, as a transgressor;
the King of all, as one condemned.”//
O long-suffering Lord, glory to Thee!

now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 6

We see a strange and fearful mystery accomplished today:
He Whom none may touch is seized.
He Who looses Adam from the curse is bound.
He Who tries the hearts of men is unjustly brought to trial.
He Who closed the abyss is shut in prison.
He before Whom the Hosts of Heaven stand with trembling stands before Pilate.
The Creator is struck by the hand of His creature.
He Who comes to judge the living and the dead is condemned to the Cross.
The Conqueror of Hell is enclosed in a tomb.
Thou Who hast endured all these things in Thy tender love,
hast saved all mankind from the curse.//
O long-suffering Lord, glory to Thee!

O GLADSOME LIGHT

People:

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory
of the immortal Father;
heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ:
Now that we have come to the setting of the sun,
And behold the light of evening,
We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!
For meet it is at all times to worship Thee
With voices of praise, O Son of God,
And Giver of Life.
Wherefore all the world doth glorify Thee.

PROKEIMENON SEQUENCE

The prokeimenon is in the Fourth Tone: They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.

My God, my God, look upon me! Why hast Thou forsaken me?

They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.

They divide my garments among them...

...and for my raiment they cast lots.

Reading from Exodus (33:11-23)

The prokeimenon is in the fourth tone: Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me; fight against those who fight against me!

They rewarded me evil for good; My soul is forlorn.

Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me; fight against those who fight against me!

Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me...

...fight against those who fight against me!

Reading from Job (42:12-17)

Reading from Isaiah (52:13-54:1)

The prokeimenon is in the sixth tone: They have laid me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

O Lord God of my salvation, I call for help by day; I cry out in the night before Thee.

They have laid me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

They have laid me in the depths of the pit...

...in the regions dark and deep.

The Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2)

The alleluia is in the first tone: *Save me, O God; for the waters have come up to my soul.*

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

They gave me gall for food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The reading is from the holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

Glory to Thy passion, O Lord!

Gospel

Matthew 27:1-38 Luke 23:39-43

Matthew 27:39-54 John 19:31-37

Matthew 27:55-61

Glory to Thy long-suffering, O Lord!

Lord, have mercy. *40 times.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Reader: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages. Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master, give me understanding of Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me by Thy statutes.

O Lord, Thy mercy endureth for ever; disdain not the work of Thy hands. To Thee is due praise, to Thee is due a song, to Thee glory is due, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord have mercy. *Twelve Times.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and Ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

THE APOSTICHA

Tone 2

Joseph of Arimathea took Thee down from the tree,
the Life of all, cold in death.

Bathing Thee with sweet and costly myrrh,
he gently covered Thee with finest linen,
and, with sorrow and tender love in his heart,
he embraced Thy most pure body.

Trembling at this awesome sight,
he cried out to Thee, O Christ://
“Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of man!”

The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty!

When Thou, the Redeemer of all, wast placed in a tomb
all Hell’s powers quaked in fear.

Its bars were broken, its gates were smashed.
Its mighty reign was brought to an end,
for the dead came forth alive from their tombs,
casting off the bonds of their captivity.

Adam was filled with joy!
He gratefully cried out to Thee, O Christ://
“Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of man!”

For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved.

In the flesh Thou wast willingly enclosed in the tomb,
Who art boundless and infinite in Thy divinity.
Thou didst close the chambers of death, O Christ.
Thou hast emptied all the palaces of Hell.//
Thou hast honored this Sabbath with Thy blessing, glory, and splendor.

Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, forevermore.

The Powers of Heaven shook with fear,
when they saw Thine ineffable forbearance.
They beheld Thee slandered by lawless men,
mocked as a deceiver by transgressors.
They beheld the stone that closed Thy tomb,
sealed by the same hands that pierced Thy side,
but they knew that Thy death would be our life,
and joyfully they cried out to Thee, O Christ://
“Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of man!”

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 5 (*When this service is done in church, at this point the priest comes out and censes the cross, and then takes the icon of Christ down from the cross, wraps it in linen, and carries it into the altar.*)

Joseph, together with Nicodemus,
took Thee down from the Tree,
Who clothest Thyself with light as with a garment.
He gazed on Thy body – dead, naked, and unburied,
and in grief and tender compassion he lamented:
“Woe is me, my sweetest Jesus!
A short while ago, the sun beheld Thee hanging on the Cross,
and it hid itself in darkness.
The earth quaked in fear at the sight.
The veil of the Temple was torn in two.
Lo, now I see Thee willingly submit to death for our sake.
How shall I bury Thee, O my God?
How can I wrap Thee in a shroud?
How can I touch Thy most pure body with my hands?
What songs can I sing for Thine Exodus, O compassionate One?
I magnify Thy Passion.
I glorify Thy burial,
and Thy holy Resurrection, //
crying, O Lord, glory to Thee!”

Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word, for mine eyes
have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light of
revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *Thrice.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot out our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord have mercy. *Thrice.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

People: Amen!

(At this point, if this service is done in Church, the priest brings out the icon cloth of Christ in the tomb, and places it on the bier, "in a new tomb.")

Tone 2 Troparion

The noble Joseph,
when he had taken down Thy most pure Body from the Tree,
wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices,//
and placed it in a new tomb.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Tone 2 Troparion

The Angel came to the myrrhbearing women at the tomb and said:
"Myrrh is fitting for the dead;
but Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption."

DISMISSAL

More honorable than the Cherubim,
And more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim,
Without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word,
True Theotokos, we magnify Thee!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
Now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen!
Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy!
O Lord, bless!

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, of the Holy New Martyr Elizabeth, and of all the saints,
Lord Jesus Christ our God, who endured fearful suffering, the life-creating Cross, and voluntary
burial in the flesh for us men and our salvation, have mercy on us and save us!

Amen!

Tone Five: Come, Let Us Bless Joseph

Come, let us bless Joseph of eternal memory,
Who came by night to Pilate
And begged for the Life of all:
“Give me this stranger
Who has no place to lay His head.
Give me this stranger
Whom an evil disciple betrayed to death.
Give me this stranger
Whom His mother saw hanging upon the Cross,
And with a mother’s sorrow cried weeping:
‘Woe is me, O my Child,
Light of mine eyes and beloved of my bosom!
For what Simeon foretold in the Temple now has come to pass:
A sword has pierced my heart!
But change my grief to gladness by Thy Resurrection!’”
We worship Thy Passion, O Christ!
We worship Thy Passion, O Christ!
We worship Thy Passion, O Christ!
And Thy Holy Resurrection!